

## COUNTY SCHOOL AFFAIRS.

Mr. Andrews Makes a Further Statement  
Regarding Charts and Finances,  
Editor of The Florida Star:

The receipt of numerous letters from all portions of the county commending and approving my action in the school board matter and asking for information concerning the same is my excuse for again asking for space in your columns.

My former colleagues on the school board state that they decided "to take the charts, books and maps in a lot at \$617.53, believing that it was as reasonable a purchase as we could make. The schools need these supplies, even if we have to carry the warrants over. The present need of the supplies warrant the expenditures," etc.

This is just the point at issue. My judgment was that the purchase was not a reasonable one at all, and furthermore that there was no need whatever that warranted any such expenditure.

In support of this contention I will state that if the encyclopedias were needed for the schools—which fact cannot be satisfactorily demonstrated—they could have been purchased, paper bound, for 25 cents each; cloth bound for 50 cents each. I have a copy of Chambers' encyclopedia, paper bound, for which I paid the sum of 25 cents, and also a copy of the American Standard, cloth bound, for which I paid the sum of 50 cents. The school board could certainly have bought them by the quantity as cheaply as I bought singly.

If the schools of the county needed maps they could have been bought of Rand, McNally & Co., of Chicago, from whom the board purchased geographies for the schools. I have a wall map, reversible, 4 by 6 feet size, mounted on muslin backing, with roller, for which I paid the sum of \$1.50. It is a Rand, McNally & Co. map, has that firm's name printed thereon in large type and is listed at \$5.00. The school board could certainly have bought these maps in quantity at the price I bought a single one.

As to the charts, I must say that the leading educators of not only Florida, but of the United States, have discarded them. They are valueless. Good, up-to-date teachers regard them, in the main, as affording no real advantage. A prominent winter resident of this county, who is a heavy taxpayer here, and who is not interested in the manufacture or sale of school charts in any manner, and who can make a fair and disinterested statement concerning them, says that in the state of Michigan, his home state, which has one of the best and most complete school systems, after having given school charts a fair and thorough trial, they have been discarded as obsolete and worthless for educational purposes, and that they can now "be bought by the carload for a song."

So much for what those at a distance think of the value of school charts. Hon. W. N. Sheats, state superintendent of public instruction, whose permission I have to use the following extracts, in acknowledging the receipt of my resignation, described this purchase of school charts as a "reckless use of school funds."

He wrote further: "My position in regard to such expenditures is well known to all who have kept up with my utterances on such matters for the past few years."

In a later letter he writes: "Once or twice in the School Journal, and previously in the Exponent, my views were published on the subject of county finances, and the purchase of charts and other dispensable school devices, especially when the county boards were embarrassed for funds to run their schools upon a cash basis."

Our state superintendent had investigated the chart business thoroughly; had published his views and position so as to give publicity and warning to all concerned, and was ready to advise county boards on the very points involved in this case. But for some inscrutable reason only the agent of the chart company was consulted.

My former colleagues were either not posted as to the worthlessness of charts; were not aware of the position of the state superintendent of public instruction on these matters, and did not know that the purchase of these charts was a "reckless use of the school funds," or else they were duped by the oily-tongued agent of the chart publishing company.

The county superintendent states that he was "bitterly opposed to the purchase of the arithmetical charts." What disarmed his opposition to the purchase of these last? He scales down the school debt with so many "probabys" that there is a vivid strain of uncertainty running through it. I am of the opinion that the uncanceled, undestroyed warrants constitute the debt of the school board, but the superintendent runs his optimistic pen along through \$275 of the warrants representing the Titusville school building, and says they "will not be paid." How does he know? Have these warrants been destroyed? Have they ever been in possession of the board? By whose authority has payment been stopped?

The superintendent states that the expenditures for all purposes will not exceed \$13,800. If teachers' salaries amount to \$9,000 and books and the pay of the board are \$1,000 more, what will be done with the other \$3,800? The superintendent has so befogged the figures "probablys" that it is exceeding

cult to keep tally on his results.

The superintendent states that "the board owed in 1897-98, \$5,657; paid during 1898-99, \$1,243."

I admit that there were \$1,243 of warrants paid by the treasurer and destroyed by the board, but what amount of warrants was issued to take the place of those destroyed?

I ask the superintendent to tell the taxpayers of the county when was there ever a dollar in the treasury to the credit of the school fund over and above outstanding warrants.

I would like for the superintendent to tell the taxpayers when the debt of the school board—the aggregate of all unpaid warrants—was less than \$5,000.

The method now in vogue is to issue warrants on the treasurer for the amount of money stated. There being no money—or not enough—in the treasury, the recipient of the warrant—say a teacher—gets it cashed by a merchant and the latter deposits it in one of the banks of the county. There is an arrangement with the banks that the school board will pay them ten per cent. interest on all warrants they may hold. Quarterly or semi-annually the banks make a list of warrants held by them, figure the interest on each one, add all the interest items together and then make out a bill against the school board for the amount of interest due. The board then issues a warrant to each bank for the amount claimed as "interest on indebtedness," which warrant is at once listed with the other warrants and in due course of time comes in as part of the amount drawing interest at ten per cent. By this method "interest on indebtedness" becomes interest bearing; in other words this method involves compounding interest on the school debt. As far as I know this compounding of interest is believed to be pernicious and contrary to the spirit and letter of our constitution and laws, making the school fund hopelessly in debt, and yet our county superintendent states "it is nothing new or startling, but approved by all business men," and also that the county is not "hopelessly or harmfully in debt." But I shall leave this matter to be settled between the school board and superintendent on the one hand, and the people on the other.

In conclusion, allow me to say to the large number of citizens who have written to me on the subject, that I am not in politics. I am not an aspirant for office or for political preferment. Under the present system and with the present methods in operation I would positively decline to accept the county superintendency or any position or office connected with school affairs. R. N. ANDREWS, Cocoa, Fla., Jan. 22, 1900.

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Thin, pale, anæmic girls need a fatty food to enrich their blood, give color to their cheeks and restore their health and strength. It is safe to say that they nearly all reject fat with their food.

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HUMUS AND MOISTURE.

How Florida Soil Differs From That of Other States.

Prof. P. H. Rolfs, late of the Florida Agricultural college, has held some radical and heterodox views, and the Florida Farmer and Fruit Grower says that it believes the following from his pen, in the Rural New Yorker, will not fail to elicit contradiction:

"Our experience, both scientific and practical, forces the conclusion upon us that Florida soil is very different from any other in the eastern United States. The amount of moisture actually needed in the soil to produce a good crop of fruit is less than one-fifth of that required in New York, and the amount necessary to soak it is also very much less. During extremely dry weather the soil rarely becomes so depleted of moisture that one will not find moist sand in the field by digging down from three to six inches. When humus is added to the soil, it acts like a sponge, taking the water up, and causes the soil to appear actually dry when really it contains the same amount of moisture that it did before the humus was added. Humus acts further as a porous medium, separating the particles of sand and increasing the evaporation of moisture. Besides this, land rich in humus requires twice or three times as great a per cent of moisture as soil rather deficient in humus. Thus, during the dry season, humus in the soil would cause it to become thirsty, and increase the radiation. During the rainy season the humus becomes filled with moisture, but fails to let it filter through as the sand does, thus tending to cut off the supply of air and to drown the plants. It has been definitely ascertained by reliable methods that the percentage of water present in sandy soils during the rainy season is only slightly above the per cent during the dry season, but in the soils rich in humus we find them to be what is locally known as "water-sodded" during the rainy season, and during the dry season they are excessively dry. Peach orchards in Florida planted on muck lands or on clay lands do fairly well for a short time, but are liable to be short-lived and a very irregular stand.

"Both experience and scientific teaching lead us to believe that pine straw, crabgrass, oak leaves and other vegetable matter should not be plowed under, as is frequently done in the stiff clay lands of the north. If these substances are used, they should never be used in any other way than mulching, or applied after having been composted. The question as to whether the using of this organic matter as a mulching is profitable will have to be decided by the individual case. Like the hauling of muck on to fruit and vegetable lands, which at one time was quite popular in Florida, the hauling of organic matter on to orchards and groves must be classed as a "harmless amusement." That there is not some advantage from both of these pleasures cannot be denied, but the whole matter of fruit growing is not one of sentiment, but whether it will bring the returns in dollars and cents. Putting it on this basis, we must put it in the doubtful class, to be decided by the individual location and condition. From what has been said above, it should not be inferred that the pure white soils of the sand dunes are the ideal ones for peach growing, but rather those that have been sufficiently subdued by vegetation to grow a first-class crop of long leaf pine, and at the same time well drained, are in about the right condition for men to transform into a peach orchard."

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